The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE SHORE OF ETERNITY.

Alone! to land alone upon that shore!
With no one sight that we have seen before!
Things of a different hue,
And the sounds all new,
And fragrances so sweet the soul may faint.
Alone! Oh that first hour of being a saint!

Alone! to land alone upon that shore
On which no wavelets lisp, no billows roar,
Perhaps no shape of ground,
Perhaps no sight or sound,
No forms of earth our fancies to arrange,—
But to begin alone that mighty change!

Alone! to land alone upon that shore!
To begin alone to live forevermore,
To have no one to teach
The manners or the speech
Of that new life, or put us at our ease!
Oh that we might die in pairs or companies!

Alone? No! God hath been there long before,
Eternally hath waited on that shore
For us who were to come
To our eternal home;
And he hath taught his angels to prepare
In what way we are to be welcomed there.
Like one that waits and watches, he hath sate,
As if there were none else for whom to wait,—
Waiting for us, for us
Who keep him waiting thus,
And who bring less to satisfy his love
Than any other of the souls above.

Alone? The God we love is on that shore,
Love not enough, yet whom we love far more,
And whom we've loved all through,
And with a love more true
Than other loves—yet now shall love him more:
True love of him begins upon that shore!

So not alone we land upon that shore;
'Twill be as though we had been there before;
We shall meet more we know
Than we can meet below,
And find our rest like some returning dove,
And be at home at once with our Eternal Love.
—*From Hymns of Frederick W. Faber.*

FAITH.

Faith in the true God is nothing but faith in goodness at its crystallizing point. When that faith reaches its right degree, the abstract becomes personified,—man believes in God. There is no real antithesis between faith and works; for, when the will is true to good works, it generates faith, even as faith reacts in added strength upon the will. There is here no unnatural task, for the will to force *belief* in facts concerning which moral insight can reveal nothing. Its work is not to torture evidence, to suppress one band of witnesses and bribe another. It is required only to exert itself in its one clear, natural way,—to rouse itself to that full self-consciousness it obtains by antagonism against the lower desires. *In* that consciousness it will find and feel the great Holy Will of the universe which works above itself.

When we become aware that the realities of the spiritual world are slipping from our grasp, we ought instantly to rouse all our strength thus to renew our consciousness of them. Nor need this effort be unaided. We may clasp back those realities with the lifted hands of prayer. God *will* give them to us, though not always, perhaps, at once. There are many mysteries in this part of our nature, and any intellectual doubt complicating our difficulties may leave them long unsettled. But grim old Giant Despair is slain from the moment when we learn that an infinite God must be infinitely good. We may be imprisoned for some sad days in Doubting Castle, or its cold shade may fall across our pilgrim path; but it has no longer a Master Fear to bolt us into its dungeons. We can force our way forth with the strong will to do it; for there is "sunshine," cloudless sunshine for us, beyond its walls. Despair lives no more when that light strikes upon him. "If there be a God, he is absolutely good. If there be a world beyond the grave, it is the good God's world,"—these are convictions which, once settled in the soul, leave atheism but a little space to work in. Sooner or later it must die of inanition. By degrees we shall all "grow in faith," feel less and less those dim veils of mist rising from the uncultured places of the heart and obscuring our vision of the heavenly heights. God will then be to us as *real* a being, his presence will be as much a *fact*, as the friend is real whose hand we press, and whose presence fills our hearts with a joy which no doubt ever dares to mar. It is so sometimes to us even now. What a thought it is, what hope to brighten life, that it will be so always at last! To live in the actual *sense* of God's ever-present love! How little need would there be of a paradise beyond!

To him who asserts that man is incapable, in this stage of existence, of making religion the primary concern of his life, let the answers now given suffice. If it *be* beyond man's nature here to love God above all, it is beyond it no less to love his brother better than his own ease or pleasure,—nay, to care for him in any way save as he chances to contribute to his sensual pleasures. But if our human nature revolts from such degradation, if we do actually "love our brother whom we have seen," then may we with irrefutable logic "love our God whom we have not seen." And, if we love our brother better than ourselves, then also may we "love the Lord our God above all, and with all our heart and soul and strength."

Faith, then, is reasonable. And faith is *right*. If it be asked, How can it be a *duty* to cherish a more vivid consciousness than we spontaneously feel of a certain external presence? the answer is ready. It is a duty to ourselves and to God. It is a duty to ourselves, because it is equivalent in all ways to the enforcing on ourselves the perpetual sense of moral obligation. It is the same thing as calling up the law itself continually before us, and more even than this; for it is the law personified, and possessing all the added influences of that divine personification. It is a duty to God, because his benefits and perfections claim of us a homage which the whole worship of life cannot adequately pay, and which we are therefore bound to offer with all the diligence we can command.

The method of performing this great duty is doubtless one of the problems which has presented itself most frequently to religious minds. I have already touched on some features of it, and will but venture to offer a few suggestions which seem most suitable to the case. The actual *consciousness* of the existence of a holy will above us is assuredly most frequently produced by the strong exertion of our own righteous will, brought into vivid life by antagonism with the lower desires. Thus every possible act of duty, social, personal, or religious, possesses a power of increasing our consciousness of God, and that power rises in the same ratio with the virtue which the performance of the duty develops.

Many special acts of duty have also their peculiar influence. Deeds of forgiveness and loving-kindness to our fellow-creatures prepare our hearts most remarkably for the higher spiritual exercises wherein absolute communion may be attained. Continual practice of truth and purity raises the soul into regions of thought and feeling wherein it perceives God's presence on all sides. Thanksgiving, if ever fully performed, would actually recall God to us in every blessing (that is to say, in every *moment*) of our lives.

In obedience, then, general and special, to the laws of God, lies our hope of increasing

and intensifying our faith. There is no use shrinking from scepticism, and trying to keep the whole subject at a distance. Let us meet our most fearful doubts bravely, with all the weapons our intellectual armory can afford; but let us also bring to bear on the battle those mighty powers of our nature which alone can really achieve the final defeat of scepticism. Let us call forth the righteous will, fighting blow for blow with every base, selfish, vain, or sensual desire, till its high-strung and quivering nerves recognize beyond mistake the unseen hand which is laid in guidance and in blessing on the champion's head. Let us use the all-powerful instrument of prayer, and ask of God that he give to us such influx of his Spirit of Truth as shall forever quell such hesitating fear, and place before us in faith his own ever-present Deity.

God *is* near us. He is above us, around us, within us, guiding every small and every great event of our lives, and continually speaking to our hearts through conscience. We all *believe* this, or rather we *admit* it: we do *not* deny it. And we are also ready to admit that, if we actually realized this truth of God's presence, we should become holy and happy to a degree of which our present blind existence can give but little semblance. Is it not strange to think this,—that on the raising our cold *admission* of a truth to a living *faith* in it depend our virtue and our ineffable joy, and yet that we do not perform an act apparently so simple, nay, make so little attempt to perform it? Whenever we do chance to grasp a clear sense of spiritual realities, we obtain a strength which lasts us for days and even years. Oh that God may help us to hold it more continually! that he may open our closed eyes to see that sun which is beaming over our heads and pouring floods of holy light upon our earthly way! He *will* help us if we but do our own part, and "draw to him as he will draw to us." Hour by hour we may do something to increase our faith. We may perform every common daily duty,—our labor of head or hand, our cares for those around us, our self-restraints of impatience or anger or sensuality,—all and each, as God's direct task, which his eye is overlooking all the while, watching both the act itself and the spirit with which we do it. We may make every trifling pain, vexation, and humiliation, "the meanest thong of all that whips us, welcome," and bless it as God's justice, God's kindness. We may receive every ordinary pleasure, food, walks, studies, and the caresses of our beloved ones, all as God's dear gifts, tokens of tenderness like the violets a mother strews on her child's cradle. We may look on the whole earth as God's world, made beautiful by his artist hand; on science as the unveiling of his wisdom; on history as the tale of his providence. All the happy, living things which roam over the fields or people the air and the waters are God's brute creatures, cared for by him who loves *us*, too. Our brother men, and those dear babes who seem to have come so short a way to us from heaven,—these are God's sons, God's children. We cannot bless one of them with the smallest kindness, we cannot feel love or admiration or sympathy for one of them, but we are blessing and loving a child of God.

Alas! how easy it *ought* to be to see in all things, serve in all things, love and worship and adore in all things, our ever-present Lord! It is a question to ask our hearts why, if it be so simple a matter, we have never attained to that faith which we acknowledge would give us such power of virtue. Do we *really* wish that God *should* be always present? Are there no words, no feelings, no thoughts, which we desire to indulge, and which we are conscious we never could indulge if we beheld those pure eyes gazing down day and night upon us? How far is the weakness of our *faith* the result of the weakness of our *will*?—*Frances Power Cobbe, in "Religious Duty."*

THE STILL HOUR.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD.

O Thou, in all thy might so far,
  In all thy love so near,—
Beyond the range of sun and star,
  And yet beside us here,—

What heart can comprehend thy name,
  Or, searching, find thee out?
Who art within a quickening Flame,
  A Presence round about!

Yet, though I know thee but in part,
  I ask not, Lord, for more:
Enough for me to know thou art,
  To love thee and adore!

Oh, sweeter than aught else besides,
The tender mystery
That like a veil of shadow hides
The Light I may not see!

And dearer than all things I know
Is childlike faith to me,
That makes the darkest way I go
An open path to thee!

—*F. L. Hosmer.*

We need to cultivate religion as we would cultivate any other habit, if we would have our God nourish it with the strength which cometh down from heaven.

Fidelity, honesty, purity, truth,—you can have no religion without them, any more than you can have any life at all that is worth the name without them.

Make the law of your being a law of sympathy, not one of repulsion; and, so sure as the daylight is stronger than the night, you will find that life becomes larger and sweeter for you continually.

It cannot be too urgently said that it is not enough for us merely to acquiesce in Christianity. Yet is not this the best that can be said of not a little which calls itself by that great name?

Nor can we find content in resolving that we will live in the world as we find it, trying only for fairly honest lives. Fairly honest lives are exactly what we cannot live without some deeper principle to hold them fast.

The fact is, that real growth in character comes as so many of the best gifts of God come,—by the way. In doing what we believe to be God's will for us, many things lie in the straight line of that fidelity.

The deep heart of God made known and accessible to his children,—this, and nothing less that this, we touch in Jesus Christ.

It is Christ himself who is the substance of the truth which he reveals. He bears witness to the nature of God, and the nature of man, and the eternal life which now is, and is to be forever.

The thing to desire is that we and all men may more and more be filled with the vision of God and of men as we see them in the face of Jesus Christ.—*H. W. Foote.*

THE BIBLE CLASS.

THE WALK IN THE CORN-FIELD.

Matt. xii. 1-14; *Mark ii.* 23-28; *Luke vi.* 1-5.

It seems probable that the date of this story should be placed somewhat later than the events we have been recording, and that the walk in the corn-field took place *after* the journey into Tyre and Sidon (consequently after the death of John the Baptist). We should find it difficult to follow the sequence of a consecutive narrative, the relative order of many events being still points of difference between scholars; and, as this passage has a special interest, we will study it by itself.

The great importance of this piece of history is that we have here the opportunity of learning something of one of the central, fundamental ideas governing the mind of Jesus; that is, he here *states a principle.* The Sabbath controversy has lasted until now, and it is of great importance that we should learn what Jesus teaches on this subject.

We remark first (in considering the text) that the expression (in the old version) in Luke only, "on the second Sabbath after the first," has been left out in the revised version, with the marginal note, "Many ancient manuscripts insert 'second-first' (Sabbath)." Even though there should be no satisfactory explanation of this so-called "enigmatical" phrase, it is worth while to note it, because it is characteristic of Luke to add, now and then, something not found in the other Gospels,—as in the story of the baptism of Jesus, where the clause "*in a bodily shape*" seems to be an erroneous interpolation,—but the words "*and praying*" sound genuine and very interesting. Luke's narratives have here and there traits which make it probable that they were collected and written down a little later than those in the other (Synoptic) Gospels, and that he took pains, in preparing his history, to see and talk with those who had known Christ personally, and thus every now and then to glean something not before recorded. Perhaps some one of the disciples told him that this walk took place on the "second-first" Sabbath; but this comparatively unimportant item may not have been copied in

some of the earliest manuscripts (all of which are lost), or Luke may have learned it from some one *after* he had once or twice written the story. So explicit a statement of an unimportant fact does not seem like an interpolation. Edersheim thinks the phrase "second-first Sabbath" refers to the first Sabbath *after* the second day between the Feast of Passover and of Pentecost. There were fifty days between Passover and Pentecost; and these were counted from the *second* Paschal day, on which took place the presentation of an *omer* of grain from the harvest. They were counted as the "first," "second," or "third" day *after* the presentation. The "second-first" Sabbath would be the *first* Sabbath after the presentation.

A most singular "rock of offence" has been made out of an expression in the Gospel of Mark,—an expression so simple and natural that it requires the greatest ingenuity to make a difficulty out of it. The literal translation from the Greek is "*began to make their way, plucking*," etc. The old version and the new both translate alike,—"began, *as they went*, to pluck the ears of corn." Meyer goes out of his way to assume that Mark intended to describe the disciples as making a *path* by plucking ears of corn! And those who follow him speak of the story *in Mark* as "grotesque" and "absurd," epithets which should be retained for Meyer. The Latin expression, "*iter facĕre*" (Conder), and the French, "*Chemin faisant*" (Edersheim), are precisely analogous. We mention this to show whither a hasty and shallow negative criticism leads.

We have not space here for a full account of the Sabbath laws, which had become so heavy a burden, with their minute and inconvenient regulations. These rules were, however, rabbinical, not Biblical, and had become so external and formal in their minutiæ that they had led to hypocrisy in the effort to evade an intolerable burden. For instance, a man might walk only a certain distance from his house; but, to avoid inconvenience, his *house* was explained to be where his food was kept. In order to double the prescribed distance, he had only to bury some food in the ground at the stated interval; and set out anew from that point; he might take a refreshing draught —if for *pleasure*, but not if it were taken as medicine.

One reason for supposing these events to have occurred somewhat later than those we have been considering is that the disciples seem to have been long enough with Jesus to have imbibed his views, and to feel confidence in transgressing the Sabbatical rules of the Pharisees. Another is, that early in the career of Jesus the Pharisees did not show toward him the open hostility which we now find.

The passages in the three Synoptics should be studied with care and closely compared.

The disciples were guilty of two breaches of the rabbinic law,—the *plucking* of the corn being one, and the *rubbing* the other. Neither act would have been a sin on a week-day. This shows how emancipated they had become. Matthew and Luke speak of their *eating* as well; and Matthew says they were "an hungered." The Pharisees then came, and said unto *Jesus*, "Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day" (Matthew and Mark read substantially the same, so far). According to Luke the reproach was addressed to the disciples directly. In all three Gospels it is Jesus who answers, narrating the story of David, and reminding the Pharisees that David ate the shew-bread in the temple, and gave it to his companions, this being unlawful for any one but the priests. Matthew's report is the fullest, for he adds here, "Have ye not read in the law how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

Now follows (in Matthew) the wonderful saying not yet fully understood by the Church of Christ: "*But I say unto you, That in this place is* A GREATER THING *than the temple*" (so literally in the Greek: see marginal note in the revised version). What is this "*greater thing*"? Compare the accounts, and see.

It has been assumed that this phrase—translated (in A.V.) "*one* greater than the temple"—refers to Jesus himself; but clear-sighted critics and scholars (Martineau, for instance) have noticed that such a speech is out of harmony with the character of Jesus. Let us compare it with the account in Mark:—

"And he said unto them, *The Sabbath was made for* MAN, *and not man for the Sabbath:*

THEREFORE (*so that*) *the* SON OF MAN *is Lord* EVEN (R.V.) *of the Sabbath.*"

The last part of this sentence is common to all three stories. "The Sabbath was made for man," etc., is only in Mark. Referring to Matthew we find another argument, in the quotation from Hosea (Hos. vi. 6).

"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire MERCY, and NOT SACRIFICE, *ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*"

What, now, do we infer from these four important sayings,—one repeated in all three Gospels, one other by Mark, and the other two by Matthew? (The passage from Hosea is a favorite one with Jesus, apparently. Matthew reports him as quoting it on a former occasion, when dining in Matthew's own house, and probably seated beside him at the table. Matt. ix. 13.)

Is it not evident that that "greater thing" than the temple is *man?* Mercy to our brother man is what God requires, not sacrifices to himself. The Sabbath itself was made *for man*, and its importance consists in the service it renders to the soul and body of man; and it is as the Son of *man* that Jesus is "Lord of the Sabbath day."

Here we have a fundamental principle; and the immense importance of this story is that it throws light on one of the central governing ideas of Christ's gospel, the value of the human soul. For *man* was the temple built. For *man* was the Sabbath appointed. All things serve man,—religion, forms, ceremonies, life and death. This earth, with all in it, is to educate man—the child of God—for his great destiny.

L. F. C.

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"Selections adapted from Xenophon," "Easy Selections adapted from Xenophon," Phillipotts; "Exercises on the Elementary Principles of Latin Prose Composition," J. H. Smith; "First Lessons in Greek," J. W. White; "Exercises in Greek Prose Composition," Elisha Jones; "Cæsar's Gallic War," edited by Allen and Greenough; "Cyropædia of Xenophon," J. J. Owen; "Smaller History of Greece," Wm. Smith; "Synopsis of Latin Grammar," Andrews; "First Four Books of Xenophon's Anabasis," Goodwin and White; Warren's "Common School Geography"; "Cæsaris Commentarii. Edidit Fridericus Kraner" (Latin text); "Iliad of Homer," Books 1–6, R. P. Keep; Gray's "Botanical Text-book," Vol. I. (Structural Botany); "History of England," Bright; "French Conversation Grammar," Otto; "Fourth Reader," Monroe; "Natural Philosophy," Quackenbos; "Elements of Surveying and Navigation," Davies; "Elements of Plane and Solid Geometry," Wentworth; "Grammar of the Latin Language," Andrews and Stoddard; "Les Princes de l'Art," Fallet; "Literary Reader," Hall; "Fourth Reader," Sargent; "Fifth Reader," Part 2, Sargent; "French Conversation Grammar," Otto.

Children's Books.

"The Dog Picture Book," J. A. Acton; "What Some Little Folks saw at the Circus."

Miscellaneous Books.

"The Pearl: A Christmas, New Year, and Birthday Present, 1840"; "Jubilee and Plantation Songs," words and music; "A Martyr of To-day: The Life of Robert Ross," Rev. J. H. Ross; "How to get Strong and stay so," Blaikie; "The Old Red Sandstone" (geology), Miller; "American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences," Beard; "Sketches of European Capitals," William Ware; "Light of Asia" (poetry), Edwin Arnold; "Popular Legends of Brittany, English Version of Souvestre's 'Foyer Breton'"; "Poems," Vol. II., Tennyson; "Le Grand-père et ses quatre Petits Fils," Fouqueau de Pussy.

Fiction.

"Lorna Doone," Blackmore; "The Prime Minister," Anthony Trollope; "Georgy Sandon, or a Lost Love," Owen; "The Romance of the Lilies," Montague; "Plain Tales from the Hills," Kipling; "Fairy Tales: Their Origin and Meaning," Bunce; "Aphrodite," Eckstein; "Delicia," Beatrice M. Butt; "A Dangerous Guest"; "Robinson's School," Jules Verne; "Mark Seaworth: Tale of the Indian Ocean," Kingston; "First Lessons in Greek," White; "French Grammar," Magill; "Elements of Geometry and Trigonometry," Legendre; "Algebra," Todhunter; "Treatise on Surveying and Navigation," Robinson; "First Lessons in Latin," Jones; "Exercises in

Latin Prose Composition," Jones; "Latin Reader," Andrews; "Latin Reader," Harkness; "Introductory Latin Book," Harkness; "Elementary Algebra," Greenleaf; "National Arithmetic," Greenleaf; "Elementary Physics," Rolfe and Gillet; "Progressive French Reader," Pinney; "Sixth Reader," Monroe.

Religious Books.

"Hymns and Tunes for Vestry and Conference Meetings," Stone; "The Path of Life," Rowland; "Ethical Religion," W. M. Salter; "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," Drummond; "The New Testament," translated by G. R. Noyes, D.D.

Mrs. W. F. Heald, Pepperell, Mass., offers the *Woman's Journal* for 1895, commencing with April number, and Saturday evening *Transcript* for 1895.

Mrs. Harry B. Shattuck, East Pepperell, Mass., offers odd numbers of *Ladies' Home Journal*, years 1890 to 1894.

Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, offers the *Ladies' Home Journal* for 1895.

Mr. W. B. Adams, 149 Newbury Street, Boston, offers thirty copies of the paper *Popular Science News* and Boston *Journal of Chemistry*, a few of each year, 1889 to 1894 inclusive.

I will send to any address the following books: "Oliver Twist," Dickens; "The House of the Wolf," Stanley J. Weyman; "The Scarlet Letter," Hawthorne; "Black Beauty." Address Helen Finney, Olympia, Washington.

The Newtonville Branch offers *Outlook* for 1894; *Harper's Weekly* for 1894; *Ladies' Home Journal* for 1893 and 1894; 50 back numbers of *Scientific American;* "Child's Book of Nature"; "The Tales of a Grandfather"; "Stories of American History," N. S. Dodge; "Ivanhoe"; "The Sacred Offering"; "Prince Otto"; "Napoleon Bonaparte"; "The Heir of Redclyffe"; "We Two," Edna Lyall; "Lob-lie-by-the-fire"; "Dred" (2 vols.), H. B. Stowe; "One Hundred Animals," a condensed book on natural history; "Lives of the Presidents"; "A Family Flight"; "Rose and Lavender"; "Sketches by Boz"; "A Natural History"; "The Boat Club"; "Magic Spectacles"; "The Wonderful Pocket"; "Book of Fables"; "Twilight Stories." Address Miss M. C. Worcester, Newtonville, Mass.

Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass., offers some more copies of Miss Yonge's pretty story, "Our New Mistress," also "A Sage of Sixteen," "We Two," Edna Lyall.

REQUESTS.

READ DIRECTIONS AT BEGINNING OF BOOK CLUB BEFORE WRITING.

We are sorry to state that our Book Club secretary, Mrs. Hallett, has been obliged to give up the work for the next few months. Until farther notice requests (as well as offers) may be sent to MRS. W. B. NICHOLS, 3 WEBSTER STREET, ALLSTON, MASS., *who has kindly taken Mrs. Hallett's place for the summer.*

Libraries.

Standing requests for libraries from:—

Rev. George H. Taylor, Rocky Ford, Colorado;

Mrs. O. A. Langston, Sidney, Comanche County, Texas;

Mrs. C. S. Stowell, Magnolia, Boulder County, Colorado;

Mr. Davis M'Carn, Anamosa, Iowa;

Mrs. D. Jayne, Cayuta, Schuyler County, New York;

Mrs. Emma Miner, Lisbon, New Hampshire;

Stephen D. Rhoden, La Pine, Crenshaw County, Alabama;

Mrs. Stowell, Mrs. Jayne, and Mrs. Miner, all need children's books. Mrs. Stowell also asks for books for a mining population (many are educated people). Mr. Graves asks for a Sunday-school and parish library, Mr. Rhoden for an industrial school for colored children.

(If any address is omitted that should be in this list of standing requests, we shall be glad to insert it in the next number.)

Books for the Anamosa Church Library, formerly sent to Rev. Charles Graves, may now be sent to Mr. Davis M'Carn, Anamosa, Iowa.

The Sidney Library is the Bibb Library, moved three miles to a somewhat better situation.

We have been obliged to postpone printing several requests for a month, because they were sent to the editor instead of to the Book Club.

I take pleasure in writing you of a bright, promising boy, who is desirous of getting a large dictionary and histories, "Zigzag Journeys in Classic Lands," or any good reading matter. He is a great reader, and has a fine memory; also is a Christian and an advocate of temperance. Will be one of our rising young men if he can have the opportunity. Mrs. J. B. Kline, 1618 West Sixth Avenue, Topeka, Kansas.

(You have not sent the boy's address. This is necessary. We cannot send any books until we receive it.)

Miss Lottie Lowe, North Platte, Nebraska, asks for reading for herself and two sisters. She would especially like to have "My Wife and I" and the *Household*.

Mrs. Carrie Smith, East Peru, Iowa, asks for "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life" and "Ben-Hur."

Mrs. Orin Reed, Ogalalla, Nebraska, would like story-books for her boy of eleven and two little girls of nine and seven years of age; also reading for an older boy.

Mrs. Mary E. Stevenson, West Bloomfield, Wisconsin, would like *Youth's Companions* for 1889, 1890, and 1891, "The Bertrams," "Gates Ajar," and "Life of John Bunyan."

Miss Florence E. Page, East Corinth, Maine, and Miss Maud C. Ide, East Corinth, Maine, both new subscribers to *The Cheerful Letter*, greatly desire reading matter.

Mrs. Fannie Jenkins, Fleming, Colorado, would like reading and story-books for her children.

(What are the ages of the children?)

Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass., asks for the following numbers of *The Cheerful Letter* from those who do not have any use for them: January, February, April, May, June, July, 1893.

OFFER.

Martha J. Flood, West Buxton, Me., offers a copy of "Tom Brown's School-days at Rugby."

To Mrs. F. W. Grant and others: Your requests should have been addressed to the Book Club. See directions.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

(We are very glad to receive contributions from any of our readers for this department. We need hardly say that the interest is increased by receiving articles from several people on one subject, each presenting a different view, or side, of the same question. The editor is not responsible for any of the theories advanced.)

THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

(*From a Lecture by Felix Adler.*)

It has been noticed that within the last century the child has attained to an entirely new place in literature. Literary child-portraiture is a recent art, of which Wordsworth, Dickens, Victor Hugo, Hawthorne, and others are masters. Children's forms, indeed, are not missing in the world's best literature. Their faces smile upon us from the pages of Homer, their figures in the Greek plays glide across the mighty stage, and lend a deeper tinge to the tragedy or plot.

Youths, maidens, and children appear in the story of the Old Testament. At the culminating point of the Hebrew prophecy we see the figure of a child. Amid the visions of the New Testament we see enthroned a little child. The millennial procession described by Isaiah is led by an infant; and, when Jesus drew his disciples around him to teach them the interior meaning of the kingdom of heaven, he placed a child in their midst, and said, "Unless ye become like it, ye can in no wise enter the kingdom."

But there is this difference to be noted: the child, as it appears in the religious literature of the past, was a type of what the adult was to be. The new departure consists in this: that in religion, as in everything else, the child is to be recognized as an independent being, claiming our interest and supreme devotion on its own account. The child to us is the banner-bearer of the future, the harbinger of the better time to come, the pledge of the progress of the human race.

In such an age how shall we plan the religious training of the young? I believe that children should never be taught any doctrine which they may be led to reject

later on. I believe it is possible to separate moral from religious instruction, and that without prejudice to the latter. At the same time I believe that it is proper and possible to develop the religious feelings of children at a very early age without teaching them any specific religious doctrines.

Now, we find that the earliest religion of mankind was that of nature, or what may be called the "religion of wonder"; and in a like manner the religious feelings of children should be directed to what is wonderful and mysterious in nature. Especially useful in this direction is the growth of plants. The child's first lesson in religion should be conned in that great picture-book which nature puts on every field, with the flowers for pictures. Again, the phenomena of storms will awaken feelings of the sublime. All the ancient religions were storm-centred : their chief god was the god of storm. Especially the aspect of the mighty heavens excite solemn feelings of the mystery of things. He who walks through life without a sense of this mystery is but a poor shrivelled being. We should early direct the attention of children to the wonder of the heavens.

There are two aids by which we should cultivate religious feelings in the young. Teaching reverence to parents is the best means of inculcating reverence toward the higher power. All the best educators of the day agree that spiritual culture rests for its foundation upon filial reverence. The child should, of course, not adore its own father and mother, but the higher moral law, of which, so far as it is concerned, they are the embodiment.

When a boy or girl reaches the age of understanding, I should teach the religious doctrine, but not dogmatically. I should open up the pages of Scripture, especially both Testaments, but not ignore the other great religions. I should try to make the pupil enter sympathetically and understandingly into the religious thought of the age, so that he might separate that which is false from what is true, the perennial from the perishable.

The theory has hitherto prevailed that whatever religious teaching was good for the adult was good for the child. This I regard as a serious mistake. The theory has also prevailed that a parent should impress his own religious belief upon his children, and, the sooner it was done, the better.

I am touched with the helplessness of children. They cannot resist the influences we bring to bear upon them, for they are like clay in the potter's hands. Is it, then, fair that we should abuse the advantage we possess over them, to force upon them ideas which they might reject if they were old enough and independent enough to do so ? I plead for the religious liberty of the young, for the freedom of choice in matters of faith. The law of duty we can impose, because on that all men agree, at least as to its essential requirements; and he who lays hold of that grasps the one thing needful, for it is incontestable that religion adds gladness, peace, and serenity to human life. The religious, like the musical, talent is latent in all men, and is capable of high development in the few.

But whether we have this talent or not, whether we understand the obligations of morality, we can all understand the laws of morality; and he who honestly tries to live up to them shall be secure in shade or shine.—*Copied for The Cheerful Letter by E. R.*

A SUGGESTION.

Hoping that it may not be considered impertinent, I wish to make a suggestion called forth by a notice in a recent number of *The Cheerful Letter.*

It is regarding packages of books, etc., sent by express to persons unable to pay on receiving them, and in which the express charges are found to be paid by the sender.

If the sender would always take a *receipt* for the package on paying the charge, and then send the receipt by mail to the person for whom the books are intended, would it not obviate the difficulty by placing in the hands of the recipient an *indubitable proof* that no further charge should be made?

E. M. S.

We are always glad to print any communication like the above, and we earnestly hope the advice will be followed. In the case of the box sent to Mrs. Berger, Manchester, Kan., the name of the sender has not yet been discovered. The box, therefore, is lost with all its contents, though probably paid for at this end.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

The present number of *The Cheerful Letter* begins a new fiscal year. It will be a great favor to our treasurer, Miss Louise Howe, and save her much trouble, if those who intend to renew their subscription will do so during the month of June, without waiting for farther notice from her. Miss Howe's personal address will be 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., until June 1. After that it will be Nahant, Mass., until farther notice. But subscriptions may be addressed to her, or left for her, *at 25 Beacon Street, Boston*, at any time.

There will be no meeting of The Cheerful Letter Exchange until farther notice.

THE ATTENTION OF ALL READERS OF "THE CHEERFUL LETTER" IS CALLED TO THE FOLLOWING NOTICE: —

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our Secretary, Miss Langmaid.

Our Book Club department has grown so large that we shall ask of all who in the future write to us for books to send the name of some minister as a reference,— when possible, the minister of the church to which they belong.

We fear that some of our subscribers have the impression that by subscribing for *The Cheerful Letter* they will be sure to receive books. The Book Club has proved an attractive department of our paper; and many of our subscribers are interested in sending books to those who are unable otherwise to obtain them. But we engage only to keep the Book Club open for offers and requests, and that under certain conditions.

We are glad to report a good financial condition. Our list of subscribers is steadily increasing. We hope, in time, to make each number of our paper larger. As it is, we are obliged, nearly every month, to omit printing requests for books and to postpone or to condense interesting letters. Our chief need at present is a fuller response to requests for books, *especially for our libraries*. We call attention to requests in our previous numbers. There happen to be fewer in this number than usual.

N.B.—PLEASE READ DIRECTIONS AT BEGINNING OF BOOK CLUB BEFORE WRITING FOR BOOKS.

The editor receives nearly every day notes which should go to the Book Club secretary (Mrs. Hallett), the treasurer (Miss Howe), or the secretary (Miss Langmaid). This greatly and needlessly increases her work. She would therefore request all readers of *The Cheerful Letter before* they address her to be kind enough to READ THE FOLLOWING

DIRECTIONS.

SECRETARY OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE, —Miss Bertha Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.

TREASURER OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE, —Miss Louise Howe, 53 Linden Street, Brookline, Mass., or 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

EDITOR OF "CHEERFUL LETTER,"—Miss L. Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

SECRETARY OF BOOK CLUB OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE,—Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.

Subscriptions and renewals may be sent to the treasurer as above. The subscription is fifty cents a year.

Notice that requests for membership and for correspondents go to Miss Langmaid, our secretary; requests for books and offers of books, to Mrs. Nichols; and to Miss Clarke only articles for insertion in the paper (not Book Club matter). All such material should be written on *one side only* of the paper, and sent by the first of the month *before* that in which it is printed.

Those not able to subscribe for the paper, but desiring to receive it, may do so by writing to Miss Ellen R. Dewson, Quincy, Mass. Please give full name and address. Many of our members take the paper, in order to send it to those who are not able to subscribe for it.

Will all subscribers or receivers of *The Cheerful Letter*, whose copy does not come regularly or comes not correctly addressed, be kind enough to notify Miss Louise Howe, as above.

Send all notices of *changes of address and requests for discontinuance* to Miss Howe. Please do not send these notices to the editor, as it causes delay in the correction.